



**STATE SENATOR NAN RICH
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
JULY 2011**

**LEGISLATURE'S REJECTION OF FEDERAL LONG-TERM CARE FUNDS
IS IRRESPONSIBLE AND SHORT-SIGHTED**

Last month, the Legislative Budget Commission voted 8-6 to reject \$2.1 million in federal funds to start a program that would allow elderly and disabled people to transition from nursing homes to home and community based settings, if they are able. The grant money would have enabled Florida to join 42 other states who have qualified for the "Money Follows the Person" demonstration program, originally created by Congress under President George W. Bush. The start-up funding eventually would have garnered Florida \$35.7 million in federal funds over the next five years to cover the cost of caring for the elderly and disabled in community-based care, which is far less costly than nursing home care.

Even Governor Scott – who is clearly not a fan of federal funding – supported accepting the grant money, as did two of my Republican Senate colleagues, J.D. Alexander and Joe Negron, who are fiscal conservatives, but whose positions as chairmen of budget committees give them an intricate understanding of the harsh realities of health care funding. Unfortunately, none of our other Republican colleagues had such foresight, so Florida's share of the federal funds will go to another state whose leaders aren't willing to shortchange their elderly and disabled for the sake of ideology.

Critics of the federal funding say they rejected the money because "federal dollars are also taxpayer dollars." Indeed they are! But thanks to the stridency of our Legislature and Governor declining millions of dollars in federal grant money, Florida taxpayers don't get a fair share of their tax dollars back from Washington. Florida ranks 48th in the country in the share of federal grant money it receives compared to tax revenue its residents send to Washington. For every dollar Florida receives in federal grant money, Floridians pay \$1.14 in federal taxes. That means our residents' tax dollars are subsidizing other states.

It just doesn't make any sense for Florida to refuse the "Money Follows the Person" funds. The grant covered 100% of the staffing and administrative costs. The federal Medicaid match for this program would have increased from about 56% to almost 78% for the first year, and we would have been under no obligation to continue the program after that. Even if we did, however, we'd still save money by moving more eligible people out of nursing homes. Our state's seniors, disabled people and taxpayers deserve better than the short-sighted political posturing that we saw at the Legislative Budget commission last month, but unfortunately, that's just what they got.



**REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARINGS
COMING TO SOUTH FLORIDA IN AUGUST**

This summer, the Florida Legislature will host 26 public hearings around the state to give Floridians an opportunity to share their thoughts about the redistricting process with state lawmakers. Redistricting must be done every ten years after the Census is taken, to make sure the number of people in Congressional and state legislative districts is evenly distributed. It's important to have a good turnout of South Floridians for the meetings in our area, so here is the schedule of hearings in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties:

Tue Aug 16	Boca Raton	10 am – 1 pm	FAU – Friedberg Lifelong Learning Center
Tue Aug 16	Davie	6 pm – 9 pm	Broward College – Main Campus Gym
Wed Aug 17	Miami	10 am – 2 pm	Miami Dade College Wolfson Auditorium
Wed Aug 17	South Miami	6 pm – 9 pm	FIU College of Law – Modesto Madique Campus

If you have any questions or comments about these public hearings, the redistricting process or any issue related to Florida government, please feel free to contact my office at (954) 747-7933 or email at rich.nan.web@flsenate.gov. As always, I appreciate the opportunity to serve as your State Senator.